

Sketch

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Ledapoem

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Ledapoem

P.F. Anderson

Abstract

Oh, to see him preen — ruffling all his edges, wingtips unfurled, wings wide and spreading; a cool momentary shadow, a settling into place, smoothing black boat thru white foam...

Ledapoem

A Selection from Without Words

by

P. F. Anderson

Psych 4

WINNER OF THE 1979 FOCUS POETRY AWARD

Oh, to see him preen—
ruffling all his edges,
wingtips unfurled,
wings wide and spreading;

a cool momentary shadow,
a settling into place, smoothing
black boat thru white foam.

All that grace contained
in a single feather
floating slowly
thru his rippling wake.

(Would he ripple? if I breathe on
him, if I touch him, oh yes, if
I stroke him, his down.)

That neck—quick and quite
accurate, snakelike,
if avoided
the beak hard, heavy;

yet she's always remembering
a man's tongue in its place, stabbing.
(Was it true? and was

he tender? was he?)
Remember how he was?
Always the bird,
with effort, but still

always the bird: mildly comic,
the loveliest clumsy creature,
postured beforehand

with a vanity
unneeded to achieve
his goal, for she
saw in him a god.

Animal and seminal god
(something more, something less than man,
something different)

lacking a man's words
to describe what little
beauties he wants
and what little love

he would have of her, despite their
(his and her) mutual need, despite
love there is to give.

He is so quiet.
How is it that a bird
could be silent
and still for so long?

Slightly ajar, she is waiting
for his finely structured passion,
she is waiting with

breath unstilled and thoughts
of what he could, he might,
he should. (Should she
resist, perhaps fight?)

I, jealous to feel the soft white
between my thighs, shyest nibble
and quiet wriggle,

would take her place at
the drop of a hat, at
his feathered side
to match his whiteness,

bringing a different softness.
Alas, tho, I am unguarded
as she never is.

She is a woman
who can understand more
than just a god
and somehow not wish

to know even more or to keep
what he cannot afford to give
this moment's exchange.

He approaches her,
shaking the last few drops
from his tail and
casting a glance past

to the peachleaf willow which will
accord a sense of an "almost"
type of privacy.

If a man he might
laugh, but still as a bird
he just ruffles
his wings and waddles

the last few steps up the moist bank,
while she is the one who laughs and
reaches out with all

she can find to give,
touched unexpectedly,
and despite all
those frustrating times

before and again, she still gives,
understanding perhaps too well
what will come of it.

His feathers are soft
(the softest, the whitest)
and tho a swan
and thus graceful, still

he is a god, thus not gentle.
His wings overshadow her eyes,
but those are shut and

she knows the cool leaves
beneath her, and calls out
no name, no words,
no surprise, calling

for a moment only what she
will never say again and what
he will say never.

the sky does not flame
and the clouds have shifted
revealing blue
same as blue before.

What was for him only a touch
is all her future, it is all,
all she knows for now.

Leaving one white flower
for her near the lake's shore
he flies high, wild.
He always was wild,

whatever he seemed in that one
moment, that stillness which she knew
with him could not last.

His wings soon silent,
she is watching only
the lake, but still
she will remember

a cool momentary shadow,
a settling into place, soft white
body in black foam.

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